

## Keeping It Real

- ▶ Inflation reduces your purchasing power and while a 3.1% long-term average may not appear to be meaningful, the impact over time can be substantial.
- ▶ Historical inflation rates for medical services and college education have been even higher, significantly reducing the inflation-adjusted dollars that are available to meet these needs.

Inflation has averaged 3.1% over the last 30 years. This might not seem like much, but this reported figure only tracks total goods and services purchased by the typical consumer. This is a good measure for the economy at large, but it may not be representative for individuals whose lifestyles and buying habits differ from the typical consumer.

Goal-based investors may experience higher inflation. People who need to focus on savings for college or medical care may be left short, as the cost for such items often tends to rise at a faster rate than the average cost of living. Those investors might not be able to keep pace with rising costs if they do not take their real inflation rate into account when planning their investment goals.

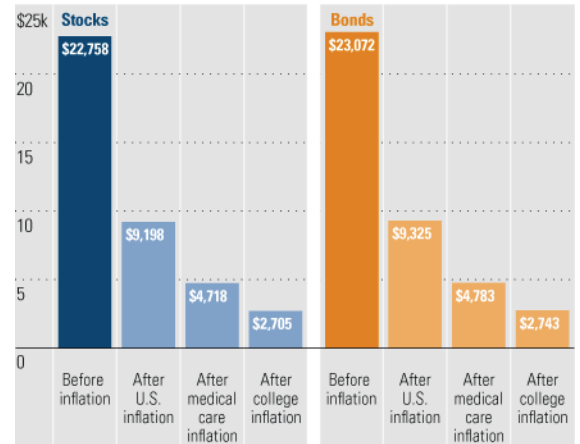
The image illustrates the effect of three types of inflation on an investment of \$1,000 in stocks and bonds: overall U.S. inflation, medical-care inflation, and college inflation. After 30 years, inflation has considerably reduced the wealth of the original investment. For example, the \$1,000 invested in stocks and bonds only grew to \$9,198 and \$9,325, respectively, after adjusting for U.S. inflation. Alas, even more bad news for a family with children or a baby boomer nearing retirement.

Further, of the two asset classes considered, bonds provided more growth after inflation, which is unusual. Investors wishing to keep pace with inflation would typically consider a larger allocation to stocks or explore other investments that protect against inflation. However, due to the two major crises and associated stock market declines experienced during the “lost decade,” stocks performed more weakly than bonds.

Past performance is no guarantee of future results. This is for illustrative purposes only and not indicative of any investment. An investment cannot be made directly in an index. Government bonds are guaranteed by the full faith and credit of the United States government as to the timely payment of principal and interest, while stocks are not guaranteed and have been more volatile than bonds. Holding a portfolio of securities for the long term does not

ensure a profitable outcome and investing in securities always involves risk of loss. The rates used in the analysis and their corresponding compound annual growth rates are the consumer price index for: all urban consumers (CPI-U) (3.1%), medical care (5.4%), and college tuition and fees (7.4%).

### Investment of \$1,000 in Stocks and Bonds Before and After Inflation Rates, 1982–2011



Source: Stocks—Standard & Poor's 500®, which is an unmanaged group of securities and is considered to be representative of the U.S. stock market in general; Bonds—20-year U.S. government bond; Historical inflation—Consumer Price Index; Growth rates of CPI categories—non-seasonally adjusted U.S. city averages from the Bureau of Labor Statistics.